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# A Comparison of Schenkerian and Conventional Theories of Form

by

©

Catherine Ann Blatz

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in

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## DEDICATION

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**JAMES NEFF**
Professor Emeritus
Augustana University College

Teacher Extraordinaire, Steadfast Supporter
and Very Dear Friend

To you, Jim, I dedicate this thesis. All the work and energy expended in research and writing, all the time spent in classes, and all the hoop-jumping required to get this degree would not have been possible without your encouragement and support. In the past ten years you have been teacher, advisor, employer, advocate, colleague and friend. You believed in me when it seemed no one else did and your faith in me produced the much needed faith that I required in myself.

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## ABSTRACT

Schenker's new theory of form uses conventional theory as the base, but his focus is on the Fundamental Structure. This focus is most evident in his description of the song forms, which in turn are the basis of the larger forms.

Many scholars have found that Schenker's structures are challenged when faced with compositions that also challenge the conventional structures. Though there is an obvious correlation here, the two concepts are too different in their emphasis to be fully reconciled.

The problem in reconciling the conventional concept of form and the Schenkerian concept of form is revealed in their differing definitions of content. Through Schenker's unusual use of 'improvisation', his definition of content is more fully understood. Though conventional theory and Schenkerian theory still disagree, with the help of Derrida's concept of 'supplement', Schenker's Fundamental Structure and its emphasis on harmony becomes a vital element of the form.

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## Introduction

Schenker set out to produce a 'new' theory of form centering on harmonic structure and linear progressions (*Zugs*) instead of on the traditional emphasis of motives, themes and phrases. Despite Schenker's rejection of the focus of the then-established definition, his concept of form clearly shows the influence of conventional thought. The two modes of formal thinking are not compatible, however. The conflict is most evident when one decides what constitutes musical content, which thereby determines the form.

This conflict is technically unresolvable; but I assert in this essay that the conflict between the two theories of form can be synthesized without endangering the principles of each. This essay looks at the relationship between the conventional concept of form and Schenker's concept of form, discussing similarities, differences, and exploring how the various focal points of each theory need not exclude the other.

I have divided the discussion into three sections. The first section gives an overview of the conventional concept of form before considering Schenker's concept of form. Schenker rejects the conventional emphasis on motives, themes and

phrases, and attempts to replace this with linear progressions and the composing-out of the Fundamental Structure (*Ursatz*). But while he discredits the traditional methods, his own theory shows the influence of conventional thought. This influence is seen through a comparison of the conventional concept of form and Schenker's concept of form.

Though the traditional forms are apparent within Schenker's definitions, his focus on the Fundamental Structure and its composing-out does propose a new view of musical form. The uninterrupted form and the two-part song form appear to be the basis of his whole concept of form. The larger forms, then, are longer prolongations of the smaller forms just as a linear progression is a prolongation of a single tone. These larger forms contain interrupted or uninterrupted Fundamental Structures at the background level.

The second section of the essay presents various contemporary Schenkerians' interpretations of Schenker's concept of form. These scholars not only have difficulty reconciling Schenker's view of form and the conventional concept of form, they also find conflicts within the individual theories themselves. Many unorthodox sonata form movements create problems when one attempts to fit them into the conventional framework, and similar problems become evident when one applies Schenker's concepts of form.

Because Schenker's theory seems to use the traditional theory as its foundation, it has difficulties with the same unorthodox works. Unfortunately this does not help to reconcile the two concepts of form. Since each attempt at reconciliation yields an unsatisfactory result, it is more feasible to incorporate the idea of structural levels into the design of conventional sonata form. The two models cannot be equated nor reconciled.

The problem in reconciling the two theories of form rests on their conflicting definitions of 'content.' The final section deals with this issue and examines the various definitions of content. Content in the conventional theory of form involves motives, themes and phrases, while Schenker's concept of content involves linear progressions and the Fundamental Structure. There does appear to be more included in Schenker's concept of content, however, and a better understanding of his view of content and form can be found in his unusual use of the term 'improvisation.'

In references to 'improvisation,' Schenker seems to refer to the process of moving from the background structure, through the middleground, to the foreground, to the actual music that is heard. Through 'improvisation,' the finished composition becomes 'connected' to the background by the diminutions of each structural level. Content, then, is the result of an improvisational process, which Schenker describes

as an unconscious mental process. The final result of this composing-out of the fundamental line and the bass arpeggiation becomes coincidental. Form appears to be epiphenomenal to these processes, determined by improvisation (a 'masterful' composing-out of the Fundamental Structure) and the relationships within the content that results.

From this, Schenker's concept of form appears to be an individual attribute of each piece, while conventional form is a generalization of pieces with similar structures. This conflict in formal representation makes agreement impossible. Through the concept of the 'supplement' as developed by Derrida, however, these two concepts can work together.

This final section concludes by uniting the conventional concept of form and the Schenkerian concept of form through the 'supplement.' The 'supplement' works through asymmetrical terms, one of which is the preferred term, while the other is the supplement. In order for the supplement to add itself, the favored term must be incomplete in some sense before. In this way, the supplement both adds and fills, completing the favored term and making both terms an integral part of each other. In reference to musical form, the conventional concept of form emerges as the preferred term because the formal category given to a piece of music is always based on the established divisions. Schenker's view becomes the supplement, which is incorporated into the conventional forms

but is never considered form generating.

Though many consider the conventional concept of sonata form to be autonomous, the thematic or motivic structure cannot function independently of the harmonic structure. In this way, Schenker's Fundamental Structure and its emphasis on harmony becomes a vital element of the form.

# I

## Schenkerian and Conventional Form Compared

### Similarities between Schenker and Goetschius

Though Schenker's concept of form has a different focus, it is still based on the conventional definitions and it assumes knowledge of the established divisions. Therefore, before Schenker's concept of form can be introduced, an understanding of the conventional definition is necessary. Percy Goetschius' summary of conventional forms from two-part song form to sonata form is given below, and will serve to represent a traditional motive- and phrase-based approach to form.

In *The Homophonic Forms of Musical Composition*, Goetschius says that the two-part song form is made up of two parts that are usually similar in character and design, but separated by a cadential interruption.[1] The first part is most commonly a period, but may also be a repeated phrase, a double period, a group of phrases, or any extension of these. The leading musical thought is presented here. The end of the first part is marked by a complete cadential break which will

[1]Percy Goetschius, *Homophonic Forms of Musical Composition* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1926).

end in order of preference, on the tonic of the dominant key (major), the tonic of the relative key (minor), the tonic of the original key, or on the tonic of some other closely-related key. Closely-related keys are those, major or minor, that differ from the tonic key by no more than one sharp or flat.

The second part conventionally assumes the form and length of the first part; if there is a difference, the second will be the longer of the two. The second part must agree with the first part formally, with regard to the general harmonic character, rhythmic character and technical style, but need not agree thematically. A change in melodic character may indicate the passing from one part to the next, but the change can not be very marked, because a radical change would make each part appear as a wholly independent musical idea, and would be inconsistent. A certain amount of consistent opposition should be created between these two parts. The second part ends with a complete tonic perfect cadence in the original key, and is usually emphasized by a codetta or an extension of the final phrase.

The fully developed two-part song form will never contain less than a period-design in the first part, and it may be larger. The second part, however, will usually be longer and is more likely to be extended. Either part may be lengthened

by repetition or extensions within each phrase or section, and the whole song may be extended by auxiliary members such as an introductory phrase, prelude, codetta or coda, and postlude.

Goetschius has various degrees of three-part song forms, all of which must contain, within the third part, a reprise of the beginning, or the first thematic section. In these cases, the second part is not a continuation (as in the two-part song forms), but a digression; part II does not proceed towards a point of rest, but instead prepares for the return of part I. The smallest three-part form is the three-part period, which contains only one phrase in each section. An incipient three-part form contains a period in the first part, but only one phrase in parts II and III.

In the ordinary complete three-part song form, the first part has the same characteristics as the first part of the two-part song form. Formally, part II should relate closely to the first part, but freedom may be employed in its melodic delineation. For example, there may be almost total agreement between parts II and I, part II may be derived from secondary members of part I, part II may contrast sharply with that of part I, part II may be melodically different than part I but still similar in style, or part II may not only be thematically different, but also somewhat independent in character and style.

Tonally, part II should avoid the tonic statement of part

I, introducing the dominant or subdominant, as well as other related or unrelated keys. It should begin on something other than tonic, and the tonic should only be touched on in passing if at all. The cadence at the end of part II should prepare for the return of part I, and is therefore most likely to be made up of the dominant harmony of the original key. Cadences on the mediant, subdominant and even the tonic are also possible.

Goetschius states that the form and length of part II is to be determined by "sensible proportion and balance,"[2] and must be left to the judgement of the composer. Approximate symmetry will likely prevail, though, with part II being slightly longer than part I. Chain-phrases (an irregular design produced when repetitions and sequences of small motives are linked together) and groups of phrases, especially in sequence, work well in this section. In larger three-part song forms, the second part may be sectional in form containing three separate phases being more or less perceptible as: a departure from the first part, a period of absence, and a return to the original starting point.

The third part of the ordinary complete three-part song form is a simple recurrence of part I, possibly with a different ending if part I did not end with a perfect cadence

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[2]Ibid 149.

in the original key. An incomplete three-part song form contains a considerably shorter third part in relation to the first part, though it still must reproduce the very first phrase of part I in order to qualify as a return to the beginning.

The complete development of the three-part song form depends on the treatment of the third part which, after reproducing the first phrase of part I, goes on to be elaborated into a more or less individual part. There are four stages in the development of the fully developed three-part song form. The first stage is evident when the third part contains a literal recurrence of the first part, while stage two goes a little farther by adding an extension to a portion of the first part. Stage three is identified by the presence of new melodic material in the third part that emerges 'naturally' out of stage two, and in stage four, some characteristic member of part II appears along with part III's own material. According to Goetschius, the third stage, as stated above, represents the most genuine type of the three-part song form.

Sonata allegro form, as described in *The Larger Forms of Musical Composition*, is based on the union of two contrasting themes on "equal footing."[3] The union of the two themes,

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[3]Percy Goetschius, *The Larger Forms of Musical Composition* (New York: G. Schirmer, Inc., 1915) 150.

connected by the transition, makes up the exposition, which ends with an authentic cadence in the key of the second theme. A double bar closes off this section and reinforces the impression of a complete union of the two themes. This is followed by a 'so-called' development which is in turn followed by a recapitulation of the exposition, creating three divisions.

The principal theme may be in any melodic or rhythmic style, as well as any emotional mood, as long as it is significant and worthy of development. This theme has no fixed form, but it is most effective in two parts. The transition into the subordinate theme may be made through an independent transition-phrase or by dissolution of the final phrase of the principal theme. The subordinate theme is in some other key, usually the dominant or other closely related key, avoiding the subdominant. In mood, this theme should effectively contrast with the principal theme. The form, again, is not set, but it is usually shorter than the principal theme. The addition of a codetta (or two or three) after this is essential. The first codetta presents a contrast to both themes by introducing something entirely new, or by deriving its content from the preceding material.

The exposition may close with an authentic cadence followed by a double bar; or the double bar may be attended by two endings; or the final phrase may be dissolved, leading

back to the beginning or to the development; or in rare cases the repeat is omitted and the double bar does not appear.

The middle section, the development, is devoted to free manipulation of the material of the exposition. Though the form of the development is always sectional, each section is free in content, style and extent. The only conditions are that no theme should appear in its complete form or in the original key; in fact, the development as a whole should avoid the original key. While the sections will not end with a complete cadence, each section will still be distinguishable by the retention of the same style or contents. The goal of the development is to regain the original key and prepare for the recapitulation.

In the recapitulation, the principal theme may be shortened, and the transition to the subordinate theme will be modified so it can return in the tonic key. As a rule, the recapitulation follows the lines of the exposition without much modification.

The coda, however, may have more significance and may be more elaborate. Its purpose is to round off the form by finishing off thematic loose ends. Its most general object is to converge the whole into the tonic, usually with a very marked inclination into the subdominant keys. The coda may assume the character of a second development.

In summary, the focus of all forms, according to

Goetschius, is on the phrase structure of each part and on the relationship of these phrases to each other. The relationship of the phrases is determined by similarities or differences in the general harmonic character, rhythmic character, technical style and motivic/thematic structure. Though rhythmic character and technical style are elements that contribute to form, Goetschius' approach focuses primarily on the harmonic structure of the phrases and the motivic/thematic development.

Schenker, in the chapter "Form", in *Free Composition*, rejects the conventional concept of form with its emphasis on motives, themes and phrases.[4] He intends to replace the established theory with specific concepts which are based on the content of the whole and of the individual parts: "that is, the differences in prolongations lead to differences in form" (FC 131). Though opposed to the emphasis on motivic repetitions found in conventional theory, Schenker does concede that repetitions may be found in the music, but they are usually hidden and make far-reaching extensions and organic connection of distant points.

The innovative aspect of this concept of form, according to Schenker, is that all forms appear in the ultimate foreground, but they have their origin in, and derive from,

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[4]Heinrich Schenker, "Form," *Free Composition*, trans. and ed. Ernest Oster, (New York: Longman, Inc., 1979) 128-145.

the background. He states that prolongation and diminution in the movement from background to foreground expands and enriches the form, but it is the passing note, the neighbour note, and the first structural division that bound form to take on organic unity. In reference to sonata form, Schenker disagrees with how young music students are taught. The organic nature of form is not dealt with, and the concept of 'development' is misleading.

In cases where a deceptive beginning (like slow introductions) leads to a false concept of form, only the middleground and the background can reveal the true form of the piece. The middleground and the background also determine the close of a composition, which is at the arrival of $\hat{1}$.

Schenker presents the specific types of forms in his theory, giving examples for each.[5] An undivided form is generated from an uninterrupted progression of the fundamental line, while a two-part song form is the result of an interruption in the fundamental line. The division $\hat{3}\ \hat{2} \| \hat{3}\ \hat{2}\ \hat{1}$, $\hat{5}\text{-}\hat{2} \| \hat{5}\text{-}\hat{1}$, or $\hat{8}\text{-}\hat{5} \| \hat{5}\text{-}\hat{1}$ naturally creates a two-part form.

The three-part form $A_1$-B-$A_2$ is produced in various ways. The bass arpeggiation I-V-I is occasionally sufficient to

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[5]Figures illustrating each form can be found in Appendix A.

establish a ternary form, while an interrupted fundamental line may also create a three-part form, even when the first level appears to be binary. The middle section may result from an expansion of V♯3, through an amplification of $\hat{2}$/V, through the process of 'securing' a seventh, or through a retransition needed to compensate for an unusual beginning. Ternary form may also be produced through mixture or through the use of a neighbor note in the Fundamental Structure.

The difference between sonata form and song form is that sonata form only results from the prolongation of a division (interruption). Though Schenker's concept of sonata form is commonly considered a two-part form, the above statement indicates that sonata form is a subdivision of the three-part form; more specifically, only the three-part forms that prolong the interruption of the fundamental line by delaying the return of the main key and the primary tone through the expansion of V♯3, through amplification of $\hat{2}$/V or through the process of 'securing' a seventh. In the description of sonata form, the second part (development) completes or expands the motion to $\hat{2}$/V♯3. This explanation seems to fit under the three-part song form definition.[6] David Beach agrees with the

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[6]For figures illustrating how sonata form is interpreted as a three-part form, see Appendix B.

above interpretation, stating that "the origin of this 'form' lies in a two-part division of the structure, the first part of which has been extended by an elaborate working-out of the dominant," and this working-out of the dominant constitutes the second part of the three-part form.[7]

As Beach says, the origin of sonata form is the two-part division of the Fundamental Structure, therefore, perceiving sonata form as a two-part song form is not unreasonable. At an earlier middleground level, the form would indeed have an interrupted fundamental line, making it a two-part song form. As Schenker explains, division plays an important role in three-part form, "even though at the first level it brings binary characteristics to the fore" (FC 132).

In the first part of sonata form (exposition), the primary tone $\hat{3}$ can be prolonged through a third progression. This third progression must be followed by $\hat{2}$/V, which is often preceded by a tonicizing II. The linear progression can also depart from $\hat{5}$, and it must continue to $\hat{3}$/III (minor) or $\hat{2}$/V (major) to complete the first section of sonata form. A

[7]David Beach, "Schubert's Experiments with Sonata Form: Formal-Tonal Design versus Underlying Structure," *Music Theory Spectrum* 15 (1993): 4.

fifth progression is sufficient for the prolongation of $\hat{2}$/V, and will naturally involve chromaticism. An unlimited number of linear progressions may prolong a note of the fundamental line.

The role of the second part of sonata form (development), is to 'eliminate' the chromaticism that occurred in the first part and to complete the motion to $\hat{2}$/V", or to expand it. The development may use diminutions taken from the exposition or it may use new ones.

The third part (recapitulation) begins the Fundamental Structure anew, and effects a closure of the fundamental line and the bass arpeggiation. Because the fundamental line begins again, a return to the main key is understood. Once $\hat{1}$ has been reached, a coda may follow.

In his gloss of *Free Composition*, Ernst Oster further explains Schenker's concept of form (FC 139-141). He states that Schenker's main purpose is to show how the forms that appear in the foreground are derived from the background and middleground. Even though Schenker's discussion of sonata form is more detailed than the undivided and the song forms, it is still sketchy and incomplete. For instance, Oster shows various cases where the V at the end of the first part is treated as an applied divider instead of being prolonged

through the development. Some examples are given which more resemble an undivided form, and instances of sonata form that show the bass arpeggiation I-III-V-I in major and the bass arpeggiation I-VI-IV-V-I are given. Some unusual cases that Oster looks at include pieces in which the development section begins on I.

After discussing sonata form, Schenker goes on to explain four-part and rondo forms. A four-part form would read $A_1$-$B_1$:$A_2$-$B_2$ with $B_1$ ending on V and $B_2$ on I. The motion to V, as well as the V itself, is strongly worked out. A five-part form, or rondo, arises when two three-part song forms are combined: $A_1$-B-$A_2$-C-$A_3$. In order for the 'A' section to return several times, it must not have too much inner tension. Therefore, it usually appears as a complete two- or three-part song form on its own, and it always appears in the main tonality. Since the contrasting sections B and C are essentially the middle section of a three-part song form, their characteristics follow those laid out in Schenker's description of the middle section of the three-part song forms. Unlike sonata form, the rondo does not contain a forward thrust to $\hat{2}$/V, and thus, it would not contain an interruption of the fundamental line.

Schenker concludes his chapter on form with a brief discussion of fugue and theme and variations, including the

passacaglia and chaconne. He states that in older music the foreground diminutions are more difficult to read, and therefore the linear progressions are not as clear in determining form.

In addition to the chapter on form in *Free Composition*, Schenker also wrote an essay dealing with sonata form entitled "Organic Structure in Sonata Form."[8] His emphasis here is on 'organic structure' though, not specifically on sonata form. Therefore, his references to 'sonata form' throughout this essay are entirely conventional, and do not contribute greatly to an understanding of his 'new' theory of form.

Schenker states that although knowledge must be reduced to a few concepts, the generalities are misleading. The sonata is easily reduced to general characteristics, but this definition is too rigid and can not deal with distinctive features of a work of genius. The concept of sonata form lacks the essential characteristics of organic structure. The organic structure is determined by the composing out of the fundamental line and the bass arpeggiation, and the whole must be discovered through improvisation.

In this essay, Schenker analyzes Haydn's Piano Sonata in G Minor op. 54 no. 1 (Hob.XVI no.44)and Beethoven's Piano

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[8]Heinrich Schenker, "Organic Structure in Sonata Form," trans. Orin Grossman, *Readings in Schenker Analysis and Other Approaches*, ed. Maury Yeston, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977) 38-53.

Sonata op.10 no. 2, as "confirmation of the crucial hallmark of improvisation" (39). Though the examples use customary indications of formal parts, his analyses also posit a deeper significance of the motion through the formal parts. The motion derives from the composing-out of the Fundamental Structure. A composition is presented in the foreground, but it must include an awareness of the background at the same time. Conventional theory looks at themes and motives in the foreground, while Schenker emphasizes diminutional motives found in the middleground and background.

Despite Schenker's stated aversion to conventional thinking on form, he does have much in common with that tradition, as exemplified by Goetschius. Not only is his theory very much grounded in conventional theory, which I will discuss later, but Schenker and Goetschius also use very similar language in their descriptions. For example, both men refer to the music as 'song forms,' not just forms, though only Goetschius gives his reasoning behind his terminology.

In *Lessons in Music Form*, Goetschius says that almost every average (i.e. brief) musical composition can be divided into either two or three fairly distinct sections of approximately equal length.[9] The word 'Part' denotes one

[9]Percy Goetschius, *Lessons in Music Form* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1904).

section, and a piece of music that can be divided into two distinct sections would be called a two-part song form while a piece that can be divided into three distinct sections would be called a three-part song form. For Goetschius, however, the prime factors in dividing the whole into its parts are cadence and melody, with the end of a 'Part' being indicated by a decisive perfect cadence on the tonic of a given key. By contrast, the prime factor in determining each 'part' for Schenker would be the division of the fundamental line and the harmonic structure.

For Goetschius, the designation 'song form' indicates that the piece of music is an intermediate grade between the smallest class (brief hymn-tunes) and the largest class (complete sonata-movements). 'Song form,' then, does not refer to vocal songs, but to a certain grade of form. Schenker also uses the term 'song form' to refer to music that is not necessarily vocal music, though in some cases it is.

As mentioned, Schenker's concept of form is set against the background of traditional formal theory. Schenker uses conventional terminology and assumes that the reader knows the conventional methods. This is especially evident in his descriptions of sonata form and the larger forms, where his divisions are the same as those established by the conventional forms. For instance, Schenker only uses conventionally sanctioned sonata form movements to demonstrate

his own concept of sonata form. His concept of three-part forms verges on conventional too, though in subtle ways. His concept of the uninterrupted and the two-part forms are not quite so conventional, since he does not specifically use only conventionally sanctioned binary pieces to demonstrate his two-part form.

Relating the uninterrupted song form to Goetschius' one-part form is more difficult than relating Schenker's other forms to Goetschius because a one-part form in conventional theory is rarely discussed in much detail. Goetschius only briefly mentions the possibility of a one-part form which contains only one decisive perfect cadence, at the end. Though there may be semicadences, this form is continuous and coherent. The most common examples of this form is the so-called phrase-form, which includes the phrase, period, and the double period. This corresponds to Schenker's undivided form which he defines as being generated by "the undivided progression of the fundamental line" (FC 130). In this sense, every piece with an undivided fundamental line would be continuous and coherent in its own right. Since every piece of music eventually comes down to an undivided structure in Schenker's definition, all music would be included in this category.

The similarity between Goetschius' and Schenker's definitions of two part song form is easier to see.

Goetschius explains that the two-part song form is made up of parts that are usually similar in character and design, but separated by a cadential interruption. The second part follows the first in logical and coherent succession. This sounds very much like Schenker's concept of a divided Fundamental Structure constituting a two-part form. Schenker's two-part form is made up of two parts that are also similar in character and design but the similarities are in the Fundamental Structure. These two parts are separated by an interruption, not a cadential interruption in this case, but an interruption of the fundamental line ($\hat{3}\ \hat{2} \| \hat{3}\ \hat{2}$).

Goetschius states that the leading musical thought is presented in the first part, the end of which is marked by a complete cadential break. The leading musical thought in Schenker's analysis would consist of the descent of the fundamental line interrupted at $\hat{2}$/V. In conventional form, the second part ends with a complete tonic perfect cadence in the original key, while the second part of Schenker's form completes the motion of the fundamental line to $\hat{1}$, effecting closure.

Goetschius goes on to say that the individual parts may be lengthened by repetition or extensions within each phrase or section, and the whole piece can be extended by auxiliary

members such as an introductory phrase, prelude, codetta or coda, and postlude. This corresponds to each section of Schenker's form having the possibility of further 'extension' or composing out. That is, each pitch of the fundamental line may be prolonged by any number of linear progressions.

Schenker's three-part song form is more difficult to relate to Goetschius. Goetschius says that all three-part song forms must feature a return to the beginning, or the first thematic section. In this case, the second part is a digression, not a continuation; it does not proceed towards a point of rest, but instead prepares for the return of part I. The third part, then, is a simple recurrence of part I, possibly with a different ending if part I did not end with a perfect cadence in the original key.

Although Schenker does not define the three-part song form in relation to thematic return, the understanding of digression away from and back to the first part is still evident in Schenker's definition. The three-part forms that have an interrupted fundamental line would contain the return of part one at the re-entrance of the primary tone, with the digression being the expansion of $V^{\sharp 3}$, the amplification of $\hat{2}/V$, the process of 'securing' a seventh, a retransition, mixture, or a neighbor note. In cases where the background is undivided, there is still a digression away from I and back to

I. In Schenker's words, "occasionally the bass arpeggiation I-V-I alone suffices to establish a ternary form" (FC 132). Goetschius of course is conventional in his emphasis, looking at phrases, themes and motives, while Schenker rejects that and looks only at the linear progressions, looking for diminutions instead of themes, phrases and motives.

It is in describing sonata form and the larger forms that Schenker uses the terminology of the conventional concept of form. The very fact that Schenker divides his text on sonata form into the three parts that are accepted as the conventional divisions of sonata form, those being exposition, development and recapitulation, shows his ties to the established forms. What Goetschius refers to as the principal theme, Schenker describes as the primary tone and the prolongation of it. What Goetschius refers to as the subordinate theme, Schenker calls the composing out of $\hat{2}$/V or $\hat{5}$/I-$\hat{3}$/III. Regardless of the description used, these two events constitute the exposition.

Though the exposition may be repeated, Schenker states that "the Fundamental Structure and the first level know no repeat sign" (FC 129). Because of this, his analyses do not acknowledge repeats that are indicated by repeat signs. On the other hand, in the actual performance Schenker believes

that the repeat is absolutely necessary in order to establish the correct balance within the form. It seems, then, that Schenker makes a distinction between form that is audibly heard and the form that is determined through his Fundamental Structure.

As Goetschius says, the exposition is followed by a 'so-called' development, which is devoted to free manipulation of the material found in the exposition. The goal of the development is to regain the original key and prepare for the recapitulation. For Schenker, the only goal of this middle section is to complete and/or expand the motion to $\hat{2}/V^{II}$, in other words, to regain the original key. He goes on to say that new diminutions are permissible in the middle section, but diminutions may also be taken from the exposition. This, however, should not be confused with the working out of material from the exposition, since the goal is the important thing, not how one gets there. Any reappearances of previous diminutions are inconsequential.

The third section, the recapitulation, returns to the original key, and as a rule, follows the lines of the exposition with the necessary modifications needed to present the subordinate theme in the tonic. This description, though taken from Goetschius, works just as well for Schenker. Schenker himself states that "a return to the main key is

understood for the recapitulation" (FC 137), though the goal for Schenker here is to effect closure of the fundamental line and the bass arpeggiation. Schenker goes on to say that once the tonality is secured, liberties may be taken in restating the material of the exposition; the most obvious liberties are associated with the restatement of $\hat{2}$/V or $\hat{5}$/I-$\hat{3}$/III. These 'liberties' parallel the 'necessary modifications' of Goetschius, which are needed in order to present the subordinate theme in the tonic.

The forms that Schenker describes following sonata form (four-part form, rondo, fugue and variations) become increasingly vague and less detailed. With very little reference to the Fundamental Structure, his 'new theory' of form is lost within the prose of conventional discourse.

## Schenker's Innovations

With all this emphasis on the conventional side of Schenker's theory of form, the unique aspects of his theory have been overlooked. Though he did not fully break from the conventional concepts, there is something within his theory that is truly original. The most innovative part of Schenker's 'new theory' of form lies in his concepts of the undivided form and the two-part song form. In both of these

forms, the deciding factor in determining the form is the Fundamental Structure, regardless of the established conventional divisions.

Though Schenker has put the three-part song form in the same category as the two-part song form, I hesitate to include it among the more innovative aspects of his theory for the simple reason that the three-part song form emphasizes prolongation of harmonic content rather than prolongation of the pitches of the Fundamental line found in the Fundamental Structure. The structure of this form is more ambiguous, since the contrasting 'B' section is created by an expansion or amplification of a specific harmony, and at an earlier level, the form is either uninterrupted or interrupted. The distinguishing factor in determining a three-part form, then, appears to be the *length* of the prolongation on some harmony other than I, and the question arises: how long does the prolongation need to be in order to move a piece of music from a two-part song form to a three-part song form? This aside, with the emphasis on harmonic content in the three-part song form, the form is much more likely to correspond to the divisions of the conventional three-part form, and is, therefore, not all that innovative.

Whether the three-part song form is included in the list of Schenker's innovations or not, within these small song

forms (including the three-part song form), the divisions created by conventional analysis *may* be blurred when the progress of the fundamental line takes priority. I emphasize that the conventional divisions *may* be blurred since the Fundamental Structure *may* also reinforce the conventional divisions. It did not seem to make much difference to Schenker either way whether his concept of form matched up with the commonly accepted divisions.

On a large scale, an example of this ambiguity of structural divisions between conventional theory and Schenker's theory can be seen in a comparison of the respective divisions of sonata form. Since the conventional concept of sonata form, as seen in Goetschius, is usually considered a three-part form, sonata form would be given the following structure:

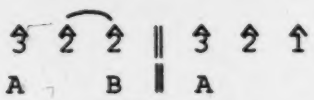
| A | B | A |
|---|---|---|
| Expo | Dev | Recap |

If one subscribes to a binary concept of sonata form in conventional terms, which many refer to as rounded binary, the division would occur prior to the B section, as follows:

‖: A :‖ B A ‖

However, Schenker's concept of sonata form as binary is an

interrupted fundamental line, which puts the division later, following the B section:




Already, there is a problem in getting the two views to agree. A further problem is evident as well. If Schenker's definition of sonata form is taken literally, many pieces that are conventionally considered to be sonata form do not conform to his definition. As will be shown in the following section, examples that result in an uninterrupted Fundamental Structure do not conform to Schenker's description. In this case, a sonata form movement that has an undivided Fundamental Structure would not have any divisions at all:

A B A

Though the conventional divisions are distantly apparent in this case, the effect of the recapitulation is lost because there is no reiteration of the primary tone in the graph. On the other hand, if Schenker's concept of sonata form is considered a three-part song form, which is what I believe, the divisions will be in approximate agreement with the conventional ternary divisions. The division between the first 'A' section and the 'B' section could vary, however,

depending on the music involved.

Though this is a large scale illustration, there are also specific Schenker graphs of musical examples that are found to either conflict with, or conform to the conventional divisions. Therefore, Schenker's divisions may reinforce the conventional divisions, or they may conflict with them. Obviously this was not an issue for him. The continuity of the fundamental line was a more important issue.

This focus on the fundamental line in the song forms, as shown in Schenker's description, results in an analysis that may function independently of conventional divisions. Though this is innovative, there is more to it. These small song forms also appear to be the basis of Schenker's whole concept of form. All of Schenker's larger forms (sonata form, four-part form, rondo, variation and fugue) are defined in relation to his definitions of the undivided form and the song forms; that is, they have the same Fundamental Structure as the song forms. The larger forms, then, are simply prolongations of the smaller forms. Schenker does specifically state that differences in prolongations will lead to differences in form, and that "these prolongations in no way determine the actual length of compositions; consequently, the customary distinction between large and small forms must be discarded" (FC 131-132).

Therefore, Schenker does not have his own unique

definitions of these larger forms, and furthermore, his terminology in calling a piece of music sonata form, for instance, is entirely conventional. In this way, Schenker's references to the large forms comes with the assumption of a previous knowledge of the conventional specifics of the form. His descriptions of the various forms, then, show how the conventional concepts of the larger forms fit in with his theory of song forms, that is the smaller forms, and the Fundamental Structure. The conventional form remains intact, only the emphasis is not motives, themes and phrases; the emphasis is diminutions.

In summary, almost any piece of music, regardless of its traditional form, would eventually be traced back to one of Schenker's song forms, the background of which would always be uninterrupted. Since every piece of music would come down to a song form in the end, Schenker really has only two basic forms, the uninterrupted form and the interrupted/two-part song form. Of course the three-part song form may be included in here as well, if one follows that train of thought.

## II

## Schenkerian and Conventional Form Applied

Schenkerian scholars agree that Schenker's theory of form is incomplete. Given this, many of them have dealt with the problems created by the gaps in Schenker's description. It has been found that unorthodox works that are difficult to fit into the conventional forms are just as problematic when dealing with the Schenkerian concept of form. Unfortunately, these works were not dealt with by Schenker and this becomes a problem when trying to adjust his theory to apply to these unusual works. It is only possible to speculate on what his intentions would be in each case.

Though applying Schenker's concept of form to specific pieces of music is often troublesome, even more problems are created when trying to reconcile the conventional concept of form with Schenker's concept of form. This issue has been dealt with many times, with varying degrees of success, but the reconciliation of conventional theory with Schenkerian theory is still unresolved. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to survey a few well-known attempts by Schenkerians to solve this problem.

In "J.S. Bach's 'binary' dance movements: form and voice

leading", Larry Laskowski asserts that it is often easy to reconcile Schenker's view of tonal structure and traditional formal views, but at other times, they seem to contradict each other.[10] He states that in sonata form it is easier to relate the two views because the traditional formal prescription is more flexible, less tied to themes and more closely linked to tonal events, making it more compatible with Schenkerian principles. Furthermore, examples of Schenkerian analyses of sonata form have revealed a relatively small number of voice-leading models, and the large scale of most sonata-form movements make experimentation of remote layers unlikely. That is, in order for a piece in sonata form to hold together, the large scale connections must be clear and certain connections can almost be taken for granted. Laskowski goes on to say that since traditional ternary form has more room for variation and experimentation, it too can relate to Schenker's principles more readily.

Traditional binary form, on the other hand, is a broader category, according to Laskowski, because it can relate to tonal structure in many ways. Using two binary movements, the Menuet and Sarabande for J.S. Bach's E major French Suite, Laskowski looks at the linear progressions, then looks at the

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[10]Larry Laskowski, "J.S. Bach's 'binary' dance movements: form and voice leading," *Schenker Studies*, ed. Hedi Siegel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) 84-93.

relationship between formal and tonal structures. Though both of these movements are similar in composition, their structural levels reveal important differences. If form is indicated by the linear progressions and the Fundamental Structure, then these two movements would have very different forms.

Although Laskowski does believe that the movement from background to foreground should be taken into account, he continually refers to the pieces as 'binary' dance movements regardless of the background or middleground graphs. By continually referring to these works as 'binary' dance movements, Laskowski implies that the voice-leading structure does not generate the form; or at least it does not generate the formal title used. Though the Fundamental Structure is not considered relevant in determining the formal title of the composition, the divisions created by conventional methods are ignored and considered irrelevant when he deals with the linear progressions. The two are independent. So, while still referring to the pieces of music as 'binary' dance movements, each 'binary' movement has its own individual structural levels. In this way, Laskowski shows that conventional binary movements exhibit different Fundamental Structures.

Yet, if the linear progressions are considered an individual attribute of a 'binary' piece, would not each

sonata form movement also have its own individual linear progressions? Would it not also relate to tonal structure in many ways? Given the conclusion of section I, that sonata form arises as a longer prolongation of the song forms, its linear progressions would indeed be an individual attribute of the piece. In general, then, the process of discovering the individual character of the linear progressions and the Fundamental Structure would be the same for all conventional forms, large or small.

As already mentioned, Laskowski believes that the conventional view of sonata form is more flexible than binary form because it is less tied to themes and more tied to tonal events, making it more compatible with Schenkerian principles. However, the Schenkerian view of sonata form may actually be more restricting than he realizes because Schenker only gives a small number of ways that the background and the middleground can relate to the traditional formal design. Hence, many works that are classified as sonata form movements but contain unusual harmonic structures do not correspond to these specifications.

Jack Adrian deals with this issue in his examination of Brahms' Clarinet Sonata in E flat, Op. 120 no. 2. This work features in its first movement, a sonata form that begins the

development in the tonic.[11] Adrian gives two possible conventional explanations for sonata forms of this type. Adrian describes the first explanation as an 'apparent' return of the tonic, which shows a return of the tonic chord at the beginning of the development but not a return of the tonic scale step (*Stufe*). He calls the second explanation a 'real' return, which contains a return of the tonic chord *and* the tonic scale step at the beginning of the development. Based on the discussion presented, Adrian concludes that the Brahms Clarinet Sonata is an example of a 'real' return.

Adrian then goes on to explain this unorthodox sonata form movement according to Schenkerian concepts. For Schenker, the origin of sonata form is in the background structure and its interruption at the point of recapitulation. In sonata form, then, the initial descent of the fundamental line is incomplete, ending on $\hat{2}$ before the end of the development. The motion from $\hat{2}$ to $\hat{1}$ is interrupted at the recapitulation by the return of the primary tone, and the Fundamental Structure is carried to a successful close. Adrian states that when the tonic chord as tonic scale step occurs at the beginning of the development, the development

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[11]Jack Adrian, "The Ternary-Sonata Form," *Journal of Music Theory* 34 (1990): 57-80.

*begins* the motion to the structural dominant rather than *continuing* the second subject towards the interruption.

The whole development section of Brahms' Clarinet Sonata is then interpreted as a recomposition of the transition to the second subject area. Adrian does not equate the dominant of the second subject area with the dominant at the end of the development since the first motion to the dominant is subsumed by the second. Though there are two interruptions, the first motion to the dominant occurs in the middleground and the one at the end of the development is in the background.

With this example, Adrian shows how an unorthodox example of sonata form challenges the conventional concept of form as well as the Schenkerian concept of form, though both concepts of form are still preserved. It also shows that both concepts are vulnerable to liberal usage of its definition. Though Schenker's definition of form may be vague and incomplete, this does not totally explain the difficulty created when applying his concepts. The challenge extends from the music itself to all theories of form.

Many examples of sonata form movements that challenge the established theories of form can be found in the music of Schubert. Schubert's method of recapitulating in the subdominant and restating the material of the exposition with little or no change beyond that of tonality, for example,

challenges the conventional definition of sonata form. Though the conventional definition of sonata form still remains intact, Malcolm Boyd sees the outcome of these 'short cuts' as a failure in achieving a balanced sonata structure.[12]

These movements, whose recapitulations are in the subdominant, result in a blurring of the demarcation between development and recapitulation. As Daniel Coren shows, Schubert also creates this kind of ambiguity by transforming the primary material in the recapitulation or by delaying the primary thematic material until the coda.[13] In all these cases, the established guidelines of sonata form must be flexible in order to maintain its hold on this music.

Since for the most part the conventional concept of sonata form can be, and is, flexible harmonically, sonata form appears to be predominantly determined thematically. Though the order and the placement of themes may be altered, their presence is absolutely necessary in some recognizable form. In this way, unusual sonata form movements with unique harmonic structures are still easily determined as sonata form in the conventional sense. Laskowski disagrees with this, stating that sonata form is less tied to themes and more

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[12]Malcolm Boyd, "Schubert's Short Cuts," *The Music Review* 29 (1968): 12-21.

[13]Daniel Coren, "Ambiguity in Schubert's Recapitulations," *Musical Quarterly* 60 (1974): 568-582.

closely linked to tonal events. In practice, however, only textbook models easily fit into the tonal scheme of sonata form. Given the unorthodox examples of sonata form demonstrated in the Boyd and Coren articles, thematic occurrence becomes much more important in determining form.

Since Schenker rejects themes and the essence of his theory rests on harmonic structure and linear progressions, applying unusual examples of sonata form to his description creates problems. Music that contains unusual harmonic structures will not so easily conform to his view of sonata form, undermining the idea of sonata form in this sense. This problem is evident when John Snyder tries to determine whether the first movement of Mozart's Piano Sonata, K. 545 is an interrupted or uninterrupted fundamental line, or if the movement is truly in sonata form.[14] This example of sonata form is harmonically unusual, with the recapitulation starting on something other than tonic. In this case, the recapitulation starts on the subdominant.

Since this movement has been discussed by many people, including Schenker, Snyder considers the various interpretations that are available before coming up with his own. Schenker dealt with it in two places, the first being in the *Tonwille* volumes, before his fundamental line concept was

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[14]John L. Snyder, "Schenker and the First Movement of Mozart's Sonata, K. 545," *Theory and Practice* 16 (1991): 51-78.

fully developed.[15] In this example, he places the beginning of the recapitulation at the entrance of the primary theme in the subdominant key.

Schenker's second analysis is found in *Free Composition*.[16] The movement is not discussed as a whole, but is used to illustrate various points. His thinking has changed though, regarding the movement as a descent from $\hat{3}$ instead of the descent from $\hat{5}$ seen in his earlier analysis. Snyder states, however, that the development does not have enough detail to follow, and it is unclear where the recapitulation starts since Schenker did not provide measure numbers for that part of his graph. Though it is true that the graph in *Free Composition* does not have much detail, Schenker clearly shows the recapitulation coinciding with the return of the tonic key. This indicates that the recapitulation begins at the return of the second theme in the tonic key, delegating the subdominant first theme to the development.

On exploring various other possibilities of dealing with the recapitulation, Snyder finds that the choices are overall

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[15]Heinrich Schenker, *Der Tonwille*, vol. 4 (Vienna and Leipzig: Tonwille-Flügblätterverlag, 1923; repr. Hildesheim: Olms, 1990) 19-21.

[16]Heinrich Schenker, *Free Composition: Supplement*, trans. and ed. Ernest Oster (New York: Longman, Inc., 1979) fig. 47.1.

unsatisfactory. He then proceeds with his own analysis where he includes the restatement of the primary theme in the development. His analysis shows the form of this movement as an interrupted 5-line. This is also deemed unsatisfactory because of the lack of harmonic support for a 5-line in the exposition.

A graph is then given of the movement as a 5-line without an interruption, with the $\hat{5}$ being prolonged through the exposition and into the development. Though Snyder is satisfied with this interpretation, it has altered Schenker's definition of sonata form with its interrupted Fundamental Structure at the point of recapitulation. In order to preserve the interrupted structure of sonata form, Snyder off-handedly suggests in a foot-note that the unorthodox structure $\hat{3}-\hat{2}\|\hat{5}-\hat{1}$ would be possible. Though this is a radical suggestion, he does suggest that one should not expect to obtain 'conventional' results from a conventionally unorthodox work.

Whether the structure of the Mozart sonata is an uninterrupted 5-line, or Snyder's radical Fundamental Structure, the description of sonata form as laid out by Schenker has been altered. The validity of the piece as being in sonata form, according to Schenker, is in question. As

David Beach suggests, the legitimacy of sonata form will be questioned if form is considered an attribute of structure. In this light, a piece of music would only be considered sonata form if form is considered an attribute of design, not structure.

Beach comes to the above conclusion through his investigation into the relationship between design and underlying structure.[17] According to Beach, Felix Salzer was the first to deal with the interaction between design and structure.[18] He separated musical composition into three separate factors: structure, form, and design. Form is further divided into inner form and outer form, while the latter is divided additionally into structure form and prolongation form. Beach says that these divisions can be confusing.

Beach then states that Allen Cadwallader reformulates what Salzer says, putting more emphasis on the processes which create form and design, with each structural level carrying its own form and design.[19] William Rothstein also builds on Salzer's terminology in his effort to reconcile the

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[17]Beach 1-18.

[18]Felix Salzer, *Structural Hearing* (New York: Dover, 1962).

[19]Allen Cadwallader, ed., *Trends in Schenkerian Research* (New York: Schirmer, 1990), 1-21.

Schenkerian and the traditional notions of form.[20]

All of these authors define 'structure' as the underlying voice-leading and harmonic organization. Beach includes all other aspects of organization under the heading 'design.' Using the opening of Beethoven's Piano Sonata in A-flat major, Op.26, Beach tries to show the relationship between design and structure. He believes that there can only be one understanding of the structure, and that the interpretations of the tonal and motivic design may have conflicting graphs to that of the structure.

Using examples from Schubert's instrumental music, Beach then looks at the interaction between formal-tonal design and tonal-structure. Though Beach, like Snyder, focuses on sonata form movements that begin the recapitulation in something other than tonic, Beach's main focus is on the frequent practice of preserving the tonal scheme of the exposition in the recapitulation.[21] Beach concludes that the first movement of the Trout Quintet in A major can be identified as sonata form only if form is considered an attribute of design. The structure, however, is a single undivided motion.

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[20]William Rothstein, *Phrase Rhythm in Tonal Music* (New York: Schirmer, 1989).

[21]Snyder's Mozart example preserves this tonal scheme as well, but this is coincidental. He set out to look at a work that begins the recapitulation in something other than the tonic and it happened to be a work that also preserves the tonal relationship of the exposition.

What Beach seems to be saying here parallels what I concluded from Laskowski earlier; Schenker's linear progressions are an individual attribute of each piece, regardless of the conventional forms. Therefore, the conventional concept of form and the Schenkerian concept of form are independent of each other. Even though they are independent, the conventional concept of form always retains a dominant position above Schenker's definition. As Snyder and Beach show, the linear progressions do not result in sonata form according to Schenker's definition, but the conventional formal title is preserved despite alterations to the conventional definition. This obvious preference for the conventional definition of form even goes to the point of controlling the motion of the Fundamental Structure.

According to Peter Smith, Schenker's interrupted structure of sonata form is evidence of the control that the conventional concept of form has on Schenker's thinking.[22] Smith states that Schenker developed the concept of division of the fundamental line through interruption in order to reconcile his view of musical form deriving from a continuous background within music that is strongly sectional. That is, the strength of the return of the original key and the primary theme at the recapitulation somehow eliminates the possibility

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[22]Peter H. Smith, "Brahms and Schenker: A Mutual Response to Sonata Form," *Music Theory Spectrum* 16 (1994): 77-103.

of continuous motion. Though this creates a delayed closure, the interruption increases the goal-directedness of the second descent, which in turn reinforces the conventional division.

Ultimately, Schenker still believes that musical form derives from a continuous background, but the weight of the recapitulation makes one continuous motion difficult to achieve. Smith reveals the problem encountered when trying to derive a continuous background from the two-part middleground of the interruption. More specifically, the problem lies in deciding which of the two descents, particularly which of the two dominants, should have greater hierarchical significance in the continuous background.

After Smith demonstrates and argues for or against the prominence of each dominant, he states that Schenker seems to favour the prolongation of the first dominant, which Smith calls the "Type-2 derivation". The "Type-1 derivation" places the structural dominant after the interruption.

Smith's illustration of the Type-1 and Type-2 derivations reveals that the Schenkerian concept of sonata form is not strict. Based on various examples of Brahms' music, Smith assigned the structural dominant before or after the interruption depending on the specific music involved. In all of his examples, the structure of sonata form is subsumed within an uninterrupted Fundamental Structure. Here again, form is deemed an aspect of structure, while Schenker's

Fundamental Structures are an individual attribute of the piece.

If the Fundamental Structure is an individual attribute of each piece regardless of the conventional form, then why do the established divisions still control the motion of the fundamental line? If the conventional concept of form and the Schenkerian concept of form are actually independent, then there should not be a problem when the Fundamental Structure does not reinforce the conventional divisions. In practice, however, Schenker's definition of sonata form is often considered faulty when the conventional divisions are altered.

As Smith points out, one of Schenker's graphs concludes the Fundamental Structure before the recapitulation of the second theme, making the restatement of the second theme an element of the coda. Obviously that will not correspond with the conventional divisions. This bothers Smith who, thus, accuses Schenker of "distort[ing] formal relationships to satisfy his own esthetic proclivities" (86). If Schenker does not have a problem doing this, then it may not be that important to follow the conventional form while looking at the linear progressions and the Fundamental Structure. It would truly be an innovative theory if the deeply ingrained concepts of conventional theory were considered irrelevant. Obviously Schenker could leave the established theory behind, giving the linear progressions and the Fundamental Structure a higher

priority. This may not even change the graph in any way since something that is harmonically prominent would still retain its importance in the graph regardless. Besides, aren't all music theorists "distorting formal relationships to satisfy their own esthetic proclivities"? Unfortunately, while resistance to breaking away from the established divisions remains, the Fundamental Structure will always be controlled by conventional theory.

All of the Schenkerians mentioned so far have maintained the established divisions within conventional sonata form, even when the examples challenge the conventional definition of the form. Whether they specifically state it or not, they all base their analyses on conventional sonata form, which is presented as a general design. Though they are trying to reconcile the two theories, the concept of structural levels still appears to be an individual attribute of the piece, which can be incorporated into, but not equated with, the conventional design.

Forte and Gilbert remain unique by not even trying to reconcile the two approaches.[23] They take a stand similar to Beach, offering the notion of sonata form as an issue of design, separate from the concept of structural levels. This

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[23]Allen Forte and Steven E. Gilbert, "Sonata Form and Structural Levels," *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1982) 276-319.

they present as the essence of the Schenkerian concept. Unlike the other Schenkerians cited here, Forte and Gilbert do not focus on unorthodox sonata form movements. Instead, they demonstrate their definition of sonata form using pieces that are relatively uncomplicated examples of sonata form movements (in keeping with the pedagogical nature of their book).

Forte and Gilbert present a detailed analysis of the last movement of Beethoven's *Piano Sonata in c minor*, Op. 10, no. 1. The analysis is given in short segments, each section depicting a distinct unit of the conventional form. The purpose of the sketch is to give a detailed view of the structural levels within the discrete sections of the movement. The conventional form takes precedence, but the linear progressions and structural levels show a different side of the music. The linear progressions are shown to fit into the conventional forms, but again the structural levels are never used to define the form.

All of the above Schenkerians have looked at different music, have had different goals, and have used different approaches to Schenker, they have all taken liberties with Schenker's concept of form. None of them have exactly followed the description of sonata form given by Schenker in *Free Composition* (excluding Laskowski who does not deal with sonata form). Even Forte and Gilbert, in dealing with

straightforward sonata form movements, use Schenker's description freely, maintaining sonata form with the conventional divisions while the background may be undivided or interrupted. Somehow, the prescribed conventional forms are always given priority and remain intact, despite ambiguous dividing lines and altered tonal relationships. Schenker's concept, however, is never given the freedom to move away from this tradition and generate forms uniquely its own.

Since both theories of form are united in that they both have difficulty with the same unorthodox examples, reconciliation may appear to be straight-forward. In spite of the fact that Schenker's concept of form is basically conventional, the emphasis of each theory makes complete reconciliation between them impossible. Since the attempts to reconcile these two concepts are unsatisfactory, it may be more useful to allow them to interact without equating the two ideas.

## III

## Schenkerian and Conventional Form Linked

### Schenkerian 'Improvisation' and Form

It has been shown so far that Schenker's concept of form is regulated by conventional concepts of form and both theories have difficulty when applied to unusual works. Despite this relationship, reconciliation has remained elusive. Because of the dissimilar focal points of each theory, the conventional theory of form and the Schenkerian theory of form cannot be reconciled. This conflict essentially comes down to each theory's respective definition of content.

According to Goetschius, as seen in section I, conventional theory is based on phrase structure and general harmonic design. Within the phrase, the leading musical thought is presented. This leading musical thought, which incorporates the motive, comprises the conventional aspect of content. The emphasis on themes becomes evident in the discussion of sonata form. Accordingly, my references to conventional content will be references to motives, themes and phrases. Though conventional form does take into account the harmonic content when it conforms to the definition, this

aspect is clearly secondary.

In Schenker's theory, content is made up of linear progressions and diminutions. From this concept of content, Schenker derives the Fundamental Structure which in turn determines the form. Though ultimately harmonic structure plays a large role in this concept of content and form, Schenker's definition of content is more fully understood through his unusual usage of the concept of improvisation. Although Schenker uses the term 'improvisation' in a peculiar way, he does not clearly define it.

Schenker's essay, "The Art of Improvisation", gives no help in determining the meaning behind his usage of the term 'improvisation.'[24] C.P.E. Bach's chapter "Improvisation: The Free Fantasia" in his *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments* is the main focus of Schenker's essay[25], and Schenker presents some Fantasias of Handel as contributions to the art of diminution. Schenker states that the composers of the twentieth century have rejected the art of diminution and can no longer create nor imitate that basic

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[24]Heinrich Schenker, "The Art of Improvisation," *Thirteen Essays from the Three Yearbooks "Das Meisterwerk in Der Musik" by Heinrich Schenker* vol. 2, trans. Sylvan S. Kalib, diss. Northwestern University, 1973.

[25]C.P.E. Bach, "Improvisation: The Free Fantasia," *Essay on the True Art of Playing Keyboard Instruments*, trans. and ed. William J. Mitchell (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1949).

law. They do not see that music consists of the horizontalizing of Nature-given chords, and everything in music proceeds from this motion. Nowhere is there an indication of what Schenker means when he uses the term 'improvisation.'

C.P.E. Bach, in his own essay, consistently uses the term 'improvisation' in the traditional sense of creating music on the spot in performance, which he explains by dealing specifically with the improvisatory style of the free fantasia. Schenker, on the other hand, sometimes uses the word 'improvisation' in this sense, but he also uses it in a sense that is interchanged with diminution; the art of improvisation interchanged with the art of diminution. So, it appears that he equates these two ideas.

Schenker uses the free fantasia as an example of how an improvisatory piece can exhibit the composed-out structure of the fundamental line and bass arpeggiation. He does this in a similar way to how he shows that the conventional forms could fit into his concepts of diminution. The free fantasia, then, becomes just another form that will, in the end, relate to one of the song forms. The fact that the free fantasia is improvisatory does not make any difference, and Schenker never discusses his own concept of improvisation.

The closest that Schenker actually gets to defining his use of 'improvisation' is not found in his essay on

improvisation, but can be found in *Free Composition*. It occurs during a discussion of fugue and the various composers' possession of improvisational gift, or lack thereof. Schenker says: "Without improvisational gift, that is, without the ability to connect the composition to the middleground and background, no good fugue can ever be written." (FC 144) From this, then, improvisation seems to be the process of moving from the background structure through the middleground, to the foreground, to the actual music. The actual composition must be 'connected' to the background by the diminutions of each structural level. Not only does the process of improvisation seem to imply the process of diminution, it also suggests a link to the compositional process.

This idea of improvisation being linked to compositional process can be further expanded by looking at one of Schenker's earliest critical writings, "Der Geist Der Musikalischen Technik"[26], as discussed in an article by Allan Keiler[27]. The first section of Schenker's essay begins with the problem of the origin of music and language. Language, Schenker says, arose as a natural expression of everyday activity while music arose as expressions of heightened

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[26]Heinrich Schenker, "Der Geist Der Musikalischen Technik," *Musikalisches Wochenblatt* 26 (1895): 245-46, 257-59, 273-74, 279-80, 297-98, 309-10, 325-26.

[27]Allan Keiler, "The Origins of Schenker's Thought: How Man is Musical," *Journal of Music Theory* 33.2 (1989): 273-298.

sensuality. Eventually, the motivation for song became separated from the act itself and became self-stimulating. Melodies arose out of the sequence of tones that were associated with 'the word.' When 'the music' and 'the word' eventually were disassociated, the motive and repetition were needed to insure musical understanding. Polyphony arose when an accompaniment in parallel fourths or fifths was added to a melody. Harmony was developed in various stages. The first coincided with the Greeks understanding of the concept of harmony, the next stage appeared with the invention of polyphony, and the most recent stage was initiated by Rameau.

The second half of Schenker's essay is a discussion of the problem of musical form. For Schenker, content is more important than form, and melody is the most fundamental element of musical content. His emphasis, then, is not on the orderly and restricted lawfulness of linear progressions, but on the infinite variety and originality of melodic style produced out of the individual fantasy of the creative artist.

Keiler finds the most striking anti-formalist idea in Schenker's claim that music has no inherent logic. Schenker's anti-organicist stance, according to Keiler, comes from his argument that organic coherence is a property that can occur only during the compositional process, and hence, it is psychological, not structural. Musical coherence results when the similarity of materials controls the process of

unconscious creative activity, that is, the play of fantasy of the artist. Therefore, real musical coherence does not exist, it is an illusion created by the imitation of the rhetorical properties of language. Schenker is convinced, however, that coherent and non-coherent music does exist and that the terminology of rhetoric is used to distinguish one from the other (rhetorical metalanguage).

As Keiler has shown, early Schenker states that organic coherence can only occur during the psychological compositional process. Since I asserted earlier that for Schenker the compositional process was linked to improvisation, improvisation also becomes a psychological process and an unconscious creative activity, the play of fantasy of the artist. Then to postulate from what Schenker says, musical coherence results only when the similarity of materials controls the process of improvisation (unconscious creative activity). Musical coherence, then, is dependant on some aspect of the musical content. For this and the following discussion, I refer only to the Schenkerian concept of content which is based on linear progressions and the composing-out of the Fundamental Structure.

From this I conclude that content, which is the result of improvisation, is determined by the individual fantasy of the creative artist. If content is instrumental in determining form, then improvisation (or the process of improvisation)

plays a part in determining form as well. Since all of this creative activity is unconscious and psychological, the final result of the composing-out of the fundamental line and the bass arpeggiation becomes coincidental. Form, then, appears to be epiphenomenal to improvisation (a 'masterful' composing-out of the Fundamental Structure) and the relationships within the content that results.

The key to the above thought is 'masterful.' It is a 'masterful' composing-out of the Fundamental Structure that results in a coherent musical work. In this statement comes the implication that there is coherent and non-coherent music, a right and wrong way to improvise. Unfortunately, this process is unconscious and psychological, which implies that it cannot be taught or learned. It is a gift of God and/or Nature. Since Schenker does talk about 'great masters' and 'a work of genius,' he implies that the 'great masters' were endowed with this gift of 'improvisation,' which I have equated with Schenker's 'psychological' compositional process. Only those who have the 'gift' of improvisation are considered a 'great master' and can create a 'work of genius.' Therefore, only composers with the gift of improvisation are successful in creating unique compositions out of the very same background structure.

It is 'Genius,' then, that is responsible for the transformation of the triad into the melodic progressions of

the fundamental line through the 'sweep of improvisation.' While at the same time that the triad is being transformed into melodic progressions, it is also being transformed into a few basic chords which are subdivided again and again. Schenker explains in "Organic Structure in Sonata Form" that it is the perogative of 'Genius' to perceive this primary harmony, and it is derived from nature. Further on, he explains again that this perception cannot be developed in an artificial way, "which is to say that only what is composed with the sweep of improvisation guarantees unity in a composition."(39)[28]

If the 'sweep of improvisation' guarantees unity, and the transformation of the triad into the melodic progressions of the fundamental line is accomplished through the 'sweep of improvisation,' then it appears that unity, or coherence, is determined by the ability to find the Fundamental Structure in the music. Knowing that the form of all good music, as found in the background, is either an uninterrupted or an interrupted Fundamental Structure, then form becomes linked to the concept of coherence as well. Coherent music, according to Schenker, would exhibit an uninterrupted or an interrupted background structure, or form.

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[28] Since Schenker earlier links coherence with the composing-out of the Fundamental Structure, while here he refers to this as unity, I have assumed that unity and coherence are synonymous.

Looking at this from another angle, if musical coherence results only when the similarity of materials (that is, content) controls the process of improvisation, and if form is determined by improvisation and content, then form once again becomes an aspect of coherence. Form appears to be a by-product of the process of improvisation and the resulting content. Based on this discussion of improvisation, I conclude that for Schenker the creative fantasy of the composer, through the art of improvisation by Schenker's definition, creates a coherent 'work of genius.' Coherence, as defined above, incorporates the concept of form.

Given that content, according to Schenker, is more important than form, and the Fundamental Structure is generated by the content, then Schenker's concept of form becomes an individual attribute of each piece through the working out of the fundamental line. Though the form may appear in the ultimate foreground, an awareness of the movement from one level to the next is necessary to understand completely the specific form of a piece of music.

Schenker's concept of form, then, appears to be a much more active process; active in its emphasis on the *motion* between levels. This becomes an essential aspect of form according to Schenker. In a sense, then, this concept of form is diachronic, focusing on form as it evolves and changes from

one level to the next. Conventional form, on the other hand, appears more passive, with form being 'frozen' to the foreground generalizations of conventional formal definitions. The conventional definition focuses on *generalizations* regarding the harmonic structure and the motives, phrases and themes found in various similar pieces. Given its static quality, conventional form seems to be synchronic, with the generalized definition giving adequate detail to describe the form. Given this obvious conflict in these two formal representations, any attempt at reconciliation between the two concepts of form will be unsatisfactory.

### Form as Derridean 'Supplement'

Derrida's concept of 'supplement' may provide a useful bridge to joining these two ideas.[29] The 'supplement' is made up of two opposites that are asymmetrically arranged. "As with any binary opposition at the heart of Western philosophy,"[30] one term is the favoured term, while the other is the devalued supplement. The favoured term is presumed complete in itself to begin with, and the supplement adds

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[29]Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1976).

[30]Adam Krims, "A Sketch for Post-Structuralist Music Theory," unpublished article.

itself to this complete term.

> We are dealing with a logic of the supplement when something characterized as marginal with respect to a plenitude...is identified as a substitute for that plenitude or as something which can supplement or complete it.[31]

In order for the supplement to complete or be added, the favoured term must have been incomplete in some sense before. In this way, the supplement also supplements, as if one fills a void (Derrida 145). The supplement, then, both adds and fills.

The logic of the 'supplement' comes into play when the term that originally acted as the 'addition,' is eventually inseparable from the term that it completed in the first place. They are an integral part of each other. Just as neither term completely adds or fills the other, neither term is complete without the participation of the other. In this way, the position of the favoured term is undermined.[32]

In current music-theoretical circles Schenker's concept of voice-leading and the Fundamental Structure is placed in a more favourable position than conventional theory. I do not believe that this is the case when dealing with Schenker's theory of 'form,' however. As I have shown, the conventional

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[31]Jonathan Culler, "Jacques Derrida," *Structuralism and Since: From Lévi-Strauss to Derrida*, ed. John Sturrock (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979) 168.

[32]For a more detailed explanation of Derrida's 'supplement' see Culler, 167-169.

concept of form seems to withstand alterations in its definition, maintaining the established specifications of the form, despite unorthodox procedures. Schenker's ideas, however, appear more inflexible and do not easily merge with the conventional ideas. This creates a conflict when trying to establish form. As a result, no matter what the Schenker graph shows, the conventional form remains intact at the expense of Schenker's definition. Once a piece of music has been formally categorized by conventional methods, great resistance to change becomes evident.

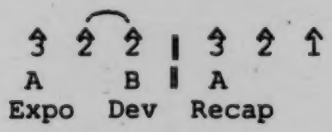
Because of this dependance on the established formal definition, I conclude that conventional form is given the status of the favoured term. Schenker's concept of form then becomes the devalued supplement, which can be incorporated into conventional form, but is never used to generate the form. Schenker's concept of form, however, is not only *able* to be incorporated into conventional form, but it is *necessary*. A closer examination reveals that Schenker's concept of form is already apparent within the established forms.

Looking specifically at sonata form, the Schenkerian concept of form can be found to be evident within the established definition. The conventional definition of sonata form, the favoured term, has its focus on thematic and motivic

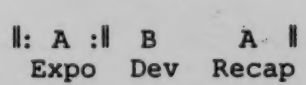
content. This gives it more flexibility, especially when being applied to sonata form movements that contain unorthodox tonal relationships. As long as the themes and motives are in a recognizable form, the established divisions are still readily identified regardless of the harmonic structure. However, it is not possible for the thematic content to dissociate itself from its harmonic content. Each theme carries within it the tonality that it is situated in, which will be placed in the overall harmonic framework of the piece. Whether the music remains in one key or modulates to other keys, the thematic and motivic aspect of the music cannot exist apart from the harmonic content. They are inseparable. The harmonic content is equally as important in understanding the form of each work.

Even though Schenker's emphasis on harmonic content creates different divisions of sonata form from the conventional definition, the established three-part concept of sonata form also incorporates Schenker's divisions. The conventional three-part view of sonata form divides the movement into the exposition, development and recapitulation. The Schenkerian two-part concept of form is incorporated into this structure, with the interruption coinciding with the division between the development and the recapitulation. The rebeginning of the Fundamental Structure and the return of tonic harmony reinforces the strength of the return of the

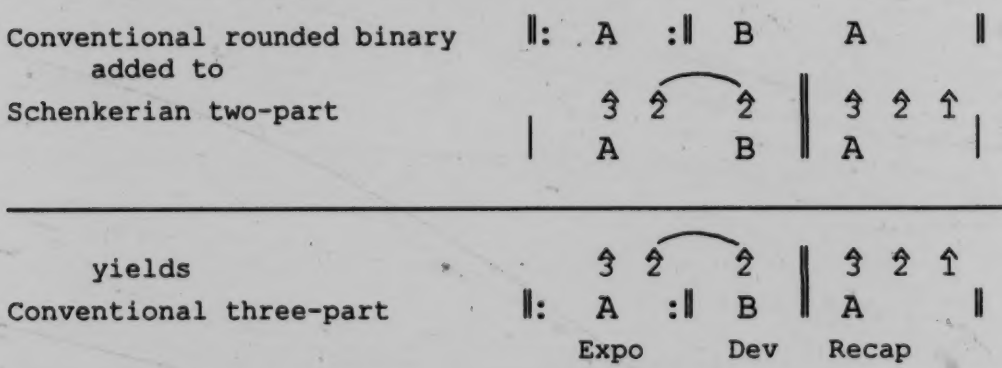
opening material at the recapitulation:




The conventional rounded binary concept of sonata form is also incorporated into this structure with the repeat signs indicating a repeat of 'A' coinciding with the division between the exposition and development of three-part sonata form.




Actually, combining the conventional rounded binary concept of sonata form to the two-part Schenkerian concept of sonata form will result in the established three-part concept of conventional sonata form, as follows:


Conventional rounded binary
added to
Schenkerian two-part
‖: A :‖ B A ‖
3 2 2 ‖ 3 2 1
| A B ‖ A |
yields
Conventional three-part
3 2 2 ‖ 3 2 1
‖: A :‖ B ‖ A ‖
Expo Dev Recap

In this way, Schenkerian sonata form is not just supplementing the conventional concept of sonata form, but it is also

evident within the established divisions. Though Schenker's concept of sonata form is still not form generating, it is an integral part of the conventional form. It cannot be separated out.

Unorthodox sonata form movements that do not result in an interrupted Fundamental Structure do not conform to the above equation, however. Those that contain an undivided Fundamental Structure, for instance, do not reinforce the divisions of the established forms in the same way. As I stated in section I, however, the conventional divisions are distantly apparent in this case, even though the effect of the recapitulation is lost without the reiteration of the primary tone in the graph.

While the equation above focuses on background analyses, both theories of form can be integrated even at the foreground level. As I mentioned earlier, each individual phrase and theme cannot be separated from the harmonic structure that it exists in. It is this harmonic structure combined with the melodic elements of the theme that contain the foreground linear progressions of Schenker's analytical process. This applies not only to sonata form. The same relationship is found in two- and three-part song forms, in rondos, theme and variations, and fugues. Linear progressions and diminutions are an integral part of the formal structure of all music that is tonally based.

Schenker's concept of sonata form, then, appears to be reinforcing the conclusion established in the previous section in which the Schenkerians maintain the conventional forms while incorporating the idea of structural levels into them; but the two approaches should not be considered separate entities. Instead, they should rely on each other to define the form. Harmonic content alone does not adequately give enough detail about the form, and thematic/motivic content alone is incomplete without an understanding of the harmonic structure that the themes are embedded in. Though the process of doing a Schenker graph may start with the conventional structure, the middleground graphs bridge the gap between the foreground, which embodies the conventional concept of form, and the background, which is always an undivided form. The themes are still important in establishing the divisions, but Schenker's harmonic structures are an integral part of the overall form as well.

Since the Schenkerian concept of sonata form is freely altered to account for works containing unorthodox tonal relationships, the unorthodox methods employed by composers in their use of harmonic structure are not brushed aside. It becomes an important aspect of the form. Schenker's focus on linear progressions and the Fundamental Structure better demonstrates the effect of the unusual tonal structures on sonata form when the traditional thematic/motivic analysis

remains relatively unaffected. Schenker's concept of form with its emphasis on harmonic content effectively shows how various different tonal structures are integrated into the thematic outlines of conventional forms.

Going back to Schenker's unusual use of improvisation, its effect on content and form gives this united concept of form a unique quality. If the conventional and Schenkerian concepts are considered essential aspects of form, and the Schenkerian concept of form is considered an individual attribute of each piece resulting from the unconscious improvisational process, then there really are no strict formal categories in any sense. All forms, which involve all aspects of musical content, are considered an individual aspect of each piece. When Schenker's ideas are embedded into the whole concept of form, then form, which includes conventional form, would be a coincidence and a result of an unconscious mental process. If this is the case, then form appears to be unique to each piece of music, and a generalized concept of form is not possible.

It seems, now, that the tables have been turned from what was stated in the first section. In that section I explained that Schenker's forms rely on the conventional definitions of form for his own definitions. That is, the generalized descriptions used in conventional theory are also used to make general categories of Schenker's forms. Through the

'supplement,' however, the conventional concept of form also relies on the Schenkerian concept of form to contribute an individual quality not found in the established general descriptions. The linear progressions describe countless ways of incorporating many different tonal structures into the phrases and thematic outlines. So, it appears that the very elements that create the conflict between the two theories become the binding elements when integrating them. In this way, the central features of each theory become pertinent to understanding the individual forms of specific pieces of music.

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## APPENDIX A

### Figures of Schenker's Forms

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The following figures are graphic representations of the various forms as outlined by Schenker in *Free Composition*. The Arabic numerals with the carets above them (^) refer to scale degrees, and Roman numerals indicate the chord that uses that scale degree as its root. These are simplified representations, and actual Schenker graphs of each form are available in the supplement to *Free Composition*. Figure numbers found in brackets following each form refer to this supplement. The examples I have put together are by no means comprehensive; many variations of these are possible and many more figures can be found in Schenker's texts.

**One-part**

$\hat{3}\quad\hat{2}\quad\hat{1}$ (Figures 1, 9 and 15)
I - V - I

OR

$\hat{5}\quad\hat{4}\quad\hat{3}\quad\hat{2}\quad\hat{1}$ (Figures 10 and 16)
I -------- V - I

**Two-part**

$\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ ‖ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$ (Figures 21 and 22)
I - V (I - V) - I

OR

$\hat{5}$ $\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ ‖ $\hat{5}$ $\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$ (Figures 24-26)
I -------- V (I --------- V) - I

**Three-part**

through bass arpeggiation

$\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$ (Figure 75)
I - V - I
$A_1$ B $A_2$

through division

expansion of $V^{\sharp 3}$ (Figure 7a)

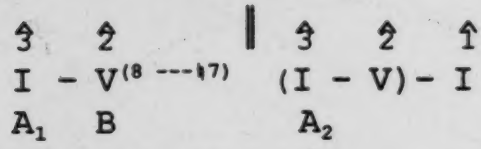
$\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ ‖ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$
I - II - $V^{(\sharp 3\text{-}4\text{-}4\text{-}\sharp 3)}$ (I - V) - I
$A_1$ B $A_2$

amplification of $\hat{2}/V$ (Figure 76.3)

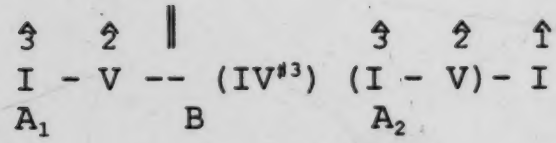
$\hat{5}$ $\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ ‖ $\hat{5}$ $\hat{4}$ $\hat{3}$ $\hat{2}$ $\hat{1}$
I -------- $V^{(\sharp 3 \text{----} \sharp 3)}$ ---------- I
$A_1$ B $A_2$

**three-part** through division continued...

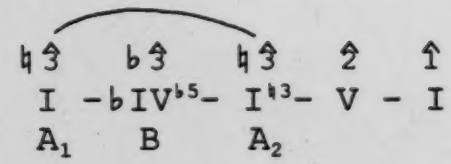
securing a seventh (Figure 46.1)




retransition (Figure 53.3)

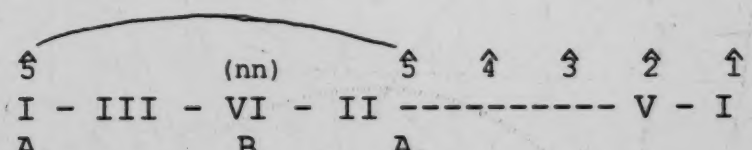



through mixture

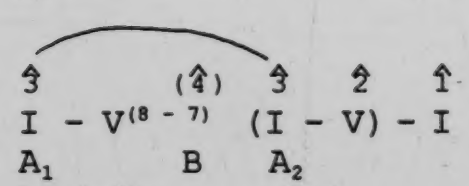



(Figure 30a)

through a neighbour note (Figure 42.1)




OR




(Figure 85)

**Sonata form** (for more detailed examples of sonata form, see Appendix B)

**Four-part**

I - V - I - I
$A_1$ $B_1$ $A_2$ $B_2$

**Rondo**

I - V - I - IV(or III) - I
$A_1$ B $A_2$ C $A_3$

## APPENDIX B

### Figures of Schenkerian Sonata Form as Three-part

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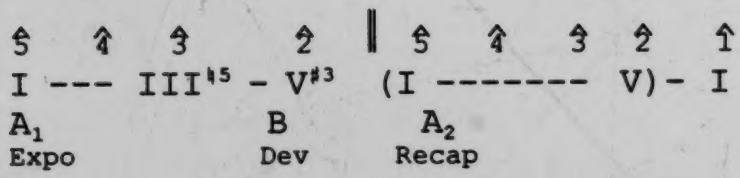
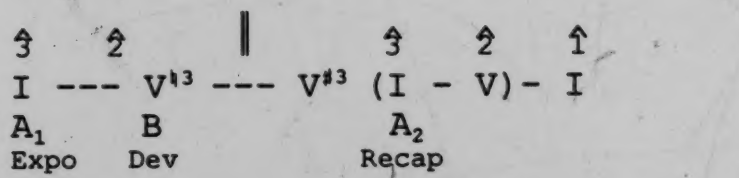
The figures used below illustrate how Schenker's concept of sonata form falls under the three-part definition that he defined. Variations are possible on these figures, and more examples are available than those that are cited.

For an explanation of the characters used in the figures, see Appendix A.

**expansion of $V^{\sharp 3}$** (Figures 26a and 154.7)




**amplification of $\hat{2}/V$** (Figures 39.2, 40.4 and 26b)




**securing a seventh** (Figures 47.1 and 47.2)